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MEDIA RELEASE

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Changes are on the Menu for Restaurants Beginning Saturday

New state food rules to benefit Durham County restaurants and patrons

DURHAM, N.C. – What’s cooking? That will be a popular question throughout the Labor Day weekend, but Durham County residents dining out at local restaurants may not notice the changes that will take place behind the kitchen doors. Thanks to changes in North Carolina’s food safety codes which take effect on September 1, the dining experience will be little safer.

The new food code represents the most comprehensive change in North Carolina’s food protection standards in more than 30 years and establishes practical, science-based rules and provisions to help avoid food-borne illnesses, like noroviruses and salmonella.

“Our inspectors have spent the last year learning the new rules and how to administer them,” said Gayle Harris, Durham County Public Health Director. “We have also worked very closely with our local food provider community to help them make the transition to the new system. These new rules allow us to keep up with changes in food preparation techniques, while keeping public health and safety in mind.”

Under the new rules, employees must avoid handling ready-to-eat food with their bare hands and all restaurants must have a certified food protection manager during hours of operation. Restaurant owners also must establish employee health policies to ensure that an ill employee who has the potential to

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contaminate food is not involved in the preparation or serving of food.

Restaurant grading systems also will change under the new food code. Although sanitation rating cards showing the grade and score will continue to be posted, restaurants will no longer earn a 2-point bonus for completing voluntary food safety training since certification will be required.

Another change that people will notice is that local food trucks and pushcarts will also be subject to the new food code rules and will be required to post a sanitation rating card.

Other key provisions of the new North Carolina Food Code include:

- Each food establishment will be required to demonstrate knowledge of food protection by passing an American National Standards Institute (ANSI) accredited exam. This requirement will be phased in and become effective January 1, 2014.
- Each food establishment will be required to develop and adhere to an Employee Health Policy to prevent and control the transmission of illnesses.
- Food establishments will be required to refrain from handling exposed, ready-to-eat foods with bare hands.
- Food establishments will be required to decrease the temperature of refrigerated foods and must date-mark opened, ready-to-eat foods.

To view the new North Carolina Food Code in its entirety, visit <http://ehs.ncpublichealth.com/rules.htm>.

For more information about the new food code or any food and lodging related issues, call the Durham County Health Department's Environmental Health Division at (919) 560-7800 or by e-mail

healthinspector@durhamcountync.gov.

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